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DEPT FOR EAP/CM, INR/B AND INR/EAP
NSC FOR WILDER AND TONG

E.O. 12958: DECL: X1 MANUAL REVIEW

TAGS: PGOV PINR CH

SUBJECT: INFIGHTING AT FUDAN UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR AMERICAN STUDIES

REF: A) SHANGHAI 306 B) SHANGHAI 316

CLASSIFIED BY: Kenneth Jarrett, Consul General, , U.S.
Consulate Shanghai.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶11. (C) Summary. During a May 21 discussion with Consul General, Fudan Center for American Studies (CAS) Director Shen Dingli in addition to sharing his views on Chinese leadership issues (reflets), spent a great deal of time discussing infighting at the Center. We share a summary of Shen's lament as an example of the political jockeying for position and personal gain that often takes place in China. Shen claimed that his main rival, CAS Vice Director Sun Zhe was not trusted by CAS staff because of his collusion with University Party officials to enroll their children at U.S. universities and Sun's efforts to obtain personal gain from academic exchanges. Sun now plans to establish a rival U.S. studies center at Tsinghua University. Shen was trying to foster a more

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cooperative atmosphere but noted that academic rivalries were strong among other CAS academics. End Summary.

¶12. (C) In a Consul General hosted lunch on May 21, Fudan University Center for American Studies (CAS) regaled the CG and Poloff with stories of university politics and infighting at CAS. Shen's comments on the sudden removal of Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing and on Shanghai leaders were reported in reflets. CAS is China's premier U.S. studies center and its academics are considered to be some of the leading U.S.-China bilateral relations experts.

Using Position To Derive Personal Benefit

¶13. (C) Shen said that CAS Vice Director Sun Zhe had still not come to terms with his failure to become Center Director after former CAS Director Ni Shixiong stepped down mid-2006. Shen said that Ni and many university party officials supported Sun to succeed Ni as CAS Director. However, many CAS staff disliked Sun because he had used his position as Deputy Director to gain personal advantages. For example, Sun had helped the children of Fudan Party officials study overseas at Columbia University, Sun's alma mater. He was also involved in trying to set up a joint Masters of Public Administration (MPA) program between

Columbia and Fudan. Sun had his own company which was acting as mediator between the two universities and was to receive 70 percent of the profits from the program. The deal eventually fell through, partly because University officials were uncomfortable with the amount of money Sun's company would receive. Afterwards, Sun introduced his contacts to Jiaotong University. This angered many CAS staffers who felt that Sun had betrayed Fudan by helping a rival school in Shanghai.

Playing Dirty - Spreading Rumors

¶ 14. (C) Shen added that the rivalry worsened after he, rather than Sun, was appointed CAS Director. At that time, rumors about Shen circulated on the Internet alleging that he had a romantic relationship with one of his graduate students. Shen believed that Sun was responsible for these rumors. Shen added that University officials were also angered by the rumors since anything that damaged Shen's reputation damaged the University's reputation.

Jumping Ship To Form a Rival Institution

¶ 15. (C) According to Shen, Sun had decided that he could no longer stay in Shanghai and would move to Beijing to set up a center for American Studies at Tsinghua University. Shen noted that although Sun had very strong ties to the Communist Party in Shanghai and business interests (his wife owns a company in Shanghai), Fudan Party officials had lost confidence in him after he was unsuccessful in getting the CAS Director's position. Shen said that he had tried to keep Sun in Shanghai and had even called Shanghai Institute of International Studies (SIIS) President Yu Xintian to see if Sun could get a position at SIIS. Yu refused, stating that there were no open positions.

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¶ 16. (C) Shen worried that Sun's move to Beijing would have a negative affect on CAS. First, his move was a blow to Shen's reputation because it could be used as an indication that he was unable to unify his staff. Second, Sun had a great deal of expertise on the U.S. Congress and connections to U.S. organizations, such as the U.S.-China Educational Trust (USCET). Shen was concerned that USCET might direct its resources to the new center at Tsinghua, once it was up and running.

University Politics - The Same All Over?

¶ 17. (C) In fact, Shen added that there had been bad blood and mistrust among CAS academics for many years. Former CAS Director Ni Shixiong cultivated this atmosphere as a means to assert his preeminence. He believed that if academics were fighting against one another than they would not oppose him. Shen said that it was not unusual for CAS academics to block the appointment of rival academics to the center. For example, CAS Vice Director Wu Xinbo recently blocked the appointment of Ren Xiao to CAS because he disliked him. There was also bad blood between Wu Xinbo and Ni Shixiong.

Trying to Focus on Substantive Work

¶ 18. (C) Shen was tired of all this infighting and hoped that these personal conflicts could be resolved soon so that CAS staff could concentrate on their scholarly work. He said that he was trying to serve as an example and be as accommodating as possible. For example, he has been very differential to Ni and tried to include him on many of CAS's events. He hoped that this would prevent Ni from trying to undermine him and hurt CAS.

Comment

19. (C) The length of Shen's soliloquy about CAS infighting is a measure of how bitter he feels about his struggle to control CAS staff and has openly discussed CAS problems with many visitors, including a group of energy experts at a dinner party attended by Econoff and visiting Australian analyst. With the departure of Sun, Shen may finally be able to move on and concentrate his efforts on building the center.

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